Live audio description in puppet theatre for children

Natalia Kiser

Teatr Baj w Warszawie

Antwerp, 29 April 2016
Around 100,000 blind or visually-impaired children in Poland

(www.pzn.org.pl)
Plastusiowy pamiętnik (1931)

[Plastuś’ Diary]

by Maria Kownacka

dir. Lech Chojnacki

The Baj Theatre, Warsaw 2014
Plastuś’ Diary – SPECIFICITY OF THE THEATRE FOR CHILDREN
SPECIFICITY OF THE THEATRE FOR CHILDREN

• Age group
• Music, songs, rich soundtrack
• Realistic ↔ metaphoric
• Special vocabulary, interesting adjectives, expressive verbs
• Obsolescence
SPECIFICITY OF THE PUPPET THEATRE

• Destined for children aged 5 onwards
• Mixed puppet, object, and live theatre
• Live characters, personified objects
• Symbolic props and stage design
• Suspension of disbelief
Plastuś’ Diary – the plot

Tosia & Zosia, the Teacher, Plastuś and the imaginary world of the pencil case
Plastuś’ Diary

- Modern and minimalistic staging: scarce props and stage design
CHALLENGES in AD

• In puppet theatre “a relation between the sign and its meaning can be very implicit at times” (ADLAB Manual, 2014)
• Imaginary & symbolic character of the play
• Personified objects vs. human characters (the Diary)
• Numerous roles created by one actor
• Two dimensions of characters
• Suspension of disbelief: objects vs. its manipulators
• Rich music
• Obsolescence of the original script
AD for Plastuś’ Diary
DESCRIPTION of CHARACTERS

• Object theatre – personified objects

• The Ink ← → an actor ”dancing” with the Ink?

• Suspension of disbelief
AD for Plastuś’ Diary

DIMENSION of PUPPETS & OBJECTS
STRATEGIES

• Why am I translating?
• For who?
• Recipient’s profile (gender, age, knowledge, cognition, visual memory?, degree of sight loss)
• What is the function of my translation?
STRATEGIES IN Plastuś’ Diary AD

• Tailor-made & fairy tale like AD
• Audio introduction containing all the technical information & details about staging
• Touch tour prior to the performance
• Naming the emotions
• Naming the functions
STRATEGIES IN Plastuś’ Diary AD

AUDIO INTRODUCTION

- Title
- Historic background & explanation of archaic elements
- Description of costumes, props, items & materials used
- Usage of human-like frames (puzzles) & objects
- Duality of objects (personified object ↔ props)
- Numerous tasks of actors
- How objects are manipulated by actors
- How actors become personified objects that they are carrying in a certain moment
STRATEGIES IN Plastuś’ Diary AD

• TOUCH-TOUR prior to the play
AD for Plastuś’ Diary
EMOTIONS
AD: Plastuś is embarrassed.
He covers his nose.

vs.

AD: Plastuś covers his nose and turns away from the Eraser.
AD for Plastuś’ Diary
EMOTIONS
AD for Plastuś’ Diary
EMOTIONS
AD for Plastuś’ Diary
EMOTIONS
AD for Plastuś’ Diary

NAMING THE FUNCTIONS
NAMING THE FUNCTIONS

AD: The ship made of school accessories is struggling in the storm.
THE VOICE TALENT

• As if s/he was another actor
• Tells the story
• Towards radio drama
• Clear directions from the audio describer
CONCLUSIONS

• Profound examination of the target group
• Audio introduction
• Touch tour
• Cooperation with the creative team
• Separation of technical information and e.g. theatric techniques used from the story itself
• No need to differentiate dimensions of objects
• Excessive information may cause unnecessary confusion
Audio description in Teatr Baj

• Plastusiowy pamiętnik (Plastuś’ Diary)
• Śpiąca królewna (The Sleeping Beauty)
• Szałaputki
• Bajka o szczęściu (Fairy tale about happiness)

and many more!

Teatr Baj

www.teatrbaj.pl
So what?

Further research on simultaneous AD for live events

Natalia Kiser
n.kiser@uw.edu.pl